

ORIGINAL



0000166905

MEMORANDUM RECEIVED

To: THE COMMISSION Arizona Corporation Commission

2015 NOV 17 P 3: 59

From: Robert Marvin
Director
Safety Division

DOCKETED

NOV 17 2015

AZ CORP COMMISSION
DOCKET CONTROL

Date: November 17, 2015

DOCKETED BY

RE: IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR/BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS TO REPLACE AN EXISTING AT-GRADE CROSSING OF THE BNSF RAILWAY AND TO CONSTRUCT A FOUR SPAN BRIDGE OVER THE BNSF RAILWAY TRACKS AND THE RIO PUERCO RIVER IN NAVAJO, APACHE COUNTY, ARIZONA, USDOT NO. 025-011-J.

DOCKET NO. RR-02635B-15-0300

Background

On August 19, 2015, the United States Department of the Interior/Bureau of Indian Affairs ("BIA") filed with the Arizona Corporation Commission ("Commission") a request for approval for BIA to replace an existing at-grade crossing of the BNSF Railway ("Railroad") with the construction of a four span bridge overpass that will span both the tracks of the Railroad and the Rio Puerco River in Navajo, Apache County, Arizona at USDOT No. 025-011-J.

The rail line in this area runs in an east-west direction, parallel to I-40. Kerr McGee/N2007 is a north to south arterial with an interchange at I-40, exit 325. (See Appendix "A")

Kerr McGee/N2007 Road

Kerr McGee Road is a two lane roadway at the railroad crossing. Currently, the crossing is protected with flashing lights, automatic gates and bells. The proposed project will replace the existing BNSF at-grade crossing with a four span bridge overpass that will span both the railroad tracks and the Rio Puerco River. The new structure will be located approximately 100 feet to the west of the existing grade crossing. The proposed project will be done in phases beginning with the relocation of the existing road and railroad crossing approximately 15 feet to the east for use as a detour while the piers and south abutment are constructed. The existing bridge will also remain as part of the detour. Once construction of the overpass is complete, traffic will be shifted to the overpass, and the at-grade crossing closed. The total construction period is to last 20 months.

This project is being funded by the Highway Trust Funds through the Federal Lands Highway Tribal Transportation Program. The total cost of the entire project is estimated to be \$15.5 million. Because this project involves closing an at-grade crossing, the Railroad will

contribute 5% of the total cost of the bridge theoretical portion of the project as their required share in accordance with 23 CFR Part 636.210. The Railroad's contribution will be \$322,460.34. The completed roadway and overpass will be maintained by the BIA in accordance with the overpass agreement.

According to the BIA, the Average Daily Traffic ("ADT") taken in 2015 was 327 vehicles per day ("vpd") to the south, and 700 vpd to the north.

The posted speed limit on Kerr McGee Road is 55 mph. Commission Rail Safety Section ("Staff") records, as well as Federal Railroad Administration ("FRA") accident/incident records indicate two incidents at this crossing with one fatality. The first occurred on July 26, 1975 when a motorist stopped on the tracks and the vehicle was struck by a train. No injuries occurred. The second incident occurred on April 3, 1988 when the driver drove thru the downed gates and was struck by the train. This resulted in one fatality. The warning devices were reported working as intended in both incidents.

Alternative routes from this crossing are as follows: to the east approximately 14 miles is AZ SH666, an overpass, and to the west approximately 18 miles is A2.63 another overpass. Due to the remoteness of this area, there are very few crossings in the area.

Train Data

Data provided by the Railroad to BIA regarding train movements through this crossing are as follows:

Train Count: 85 average trains per day

Train Speed: 90 mph passenger / 55 mph freight

Thru Freight/Switching Moves: All moves through this crossing are thru freight. This crossing is used by Amtrak.

Schools and Bus Routes

Per the BIA:

The closest school is the Sanders Elementary and High School 30 miles east of Navajo, Arizona, and the school buses do use route N2007 to pick up and drop off school children twice a day through the existing crossing.

Hospitals

The nearest hospital to the Kerr McGee/N2007 Road crossing is:

Unknown.

Hazardous Materials

The BIA gave the following response when asked about hazardous materials crossing this crossing:

It is not known how much hazardous materials traffic uses the existing crossing each day.

Zoning

Staff requested that the BIA provide information regarding the type of zoning in adjacent areas from the crossing. The following was their response:

The Lands are all fee status and there is already a small truck stop, gas station and convenient store next to the route along the I-40 route interchange where this route N2007 connects to. There is also existing housing just south of the I-40 interchange with plans to build more to the south on the NHIRC New lands which this bridge will provide better access to. We also spoke with a land owner (Von Jensen) who has been planning with other investors to build a Wal-Mart transfer station and housing just south of the Rio Puerco wash. These planned developments cannot take place until a new bridge is built.

Grade Separation

When asked why the grade separation is needed the BIA replied:

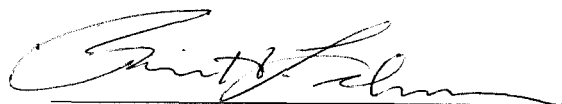
The old one lane bridge inspection reports showed a rapid decline in the structural sufficiency rating which is what drove the decision to replace the bridge back in 2002. However, field inspections revealed a replacement bridge would be too close to the railroad crossing, resulting in a decision to build an overpass instead to span both the wash and railroad that would meet the current AASHTO Design criteria. In talking with BNSF technical staff in 2006, we also found out that trains pass through the location every 22 minutes in the peak of summer, and 15 minutes in the late fall and winter. This would create a safety hazard to the Navajo community who use this route. In 2008, the Navajo Nation informed us of their plans to develop the land north and south of the Rio Puerco and local land owners also want to develop a big transfer station for Wal-Mart stores with a housing development. In light of these new developments, we and the Office of Navajo Hopi Indian Relocation Commission decided it made sense to build a large overpass that would span the railroad at-grade crossing and wash. It took us 8 years to finally consummate an agreement with the railroad company to now build the overpass.

Crossing Closure

The existing at-grade crossing will be closed once the grade separation is completed.

Staff Conclusions

Having reviewed all applicable data, Staff supports the BIA's application. Staff believes the grade separation and the elimination of the at-grade crossing is in the public's interest and is reasonable. Staff believes that the measures proposed by the BIA are consistent with other similar grade-separated crossings in the State and will provide for the public's safety. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the BIA's application.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Brian H. Lehman", written in black ink.

Brian H. Lehman
Railroad Safety Supervisor
Safety Division

Originator: BHL

Original and thirteen (13) copies
of the foregoing were filed this
17th day of November 2015 with:

Docket No. RR-02635B-15-0300

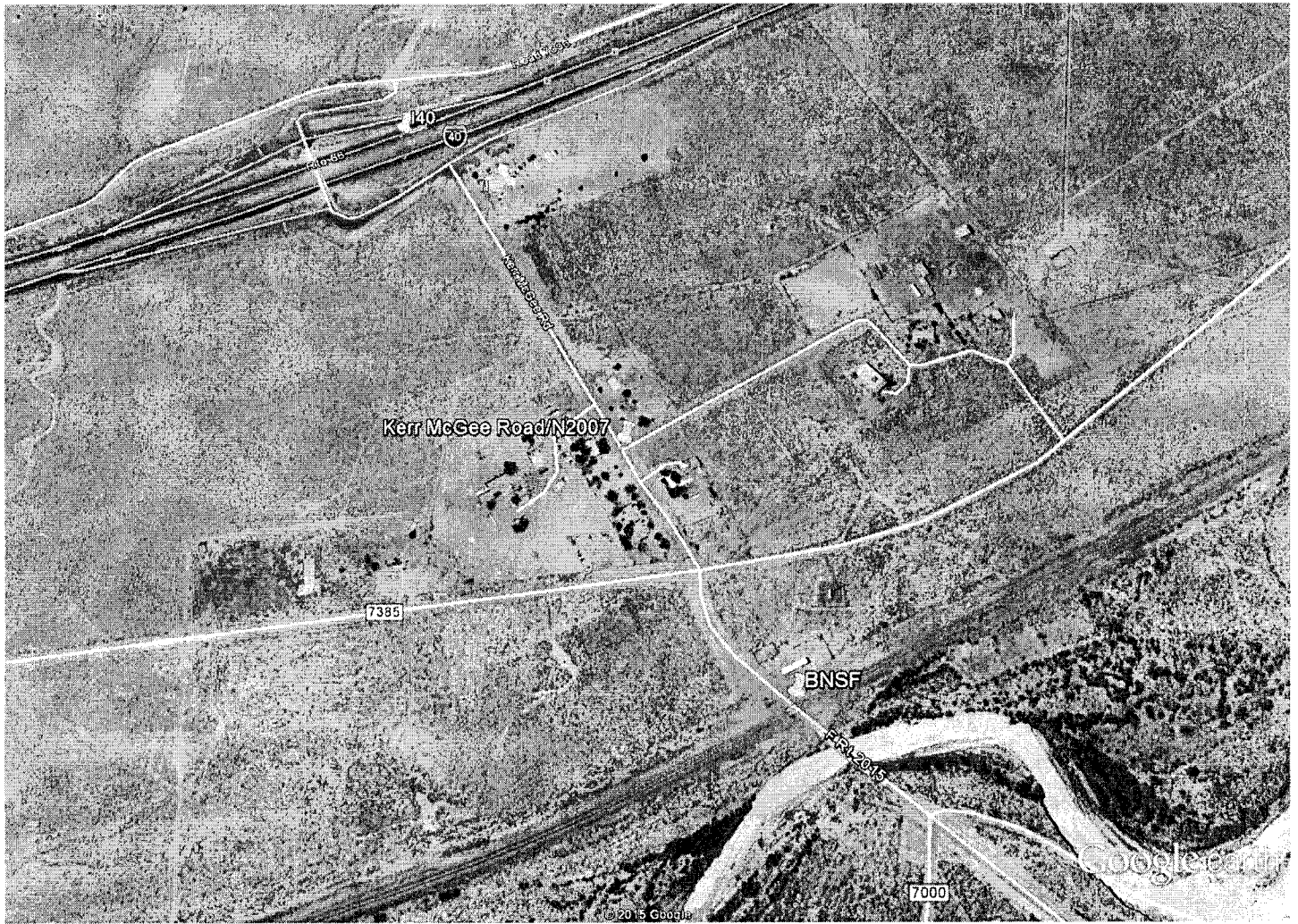
Copy of the foregoing mailed
this 17th day of November, 2015 to:

Mathew Keim
Manager of Public Projects
BNSF
740 E. Carnegie drive
San Bernardino, CA 92408-3571

Patrick Black
Fennemore Craig
2394 E. Camelback Road, Suite 600
Phoenix, AZ 85016-3429

Vicki Bever, Manager
Utility and Railroad Engineering
ADOT
205 S. 17th Avenue M/D 618E
Phoenix, Az. 85007-3212

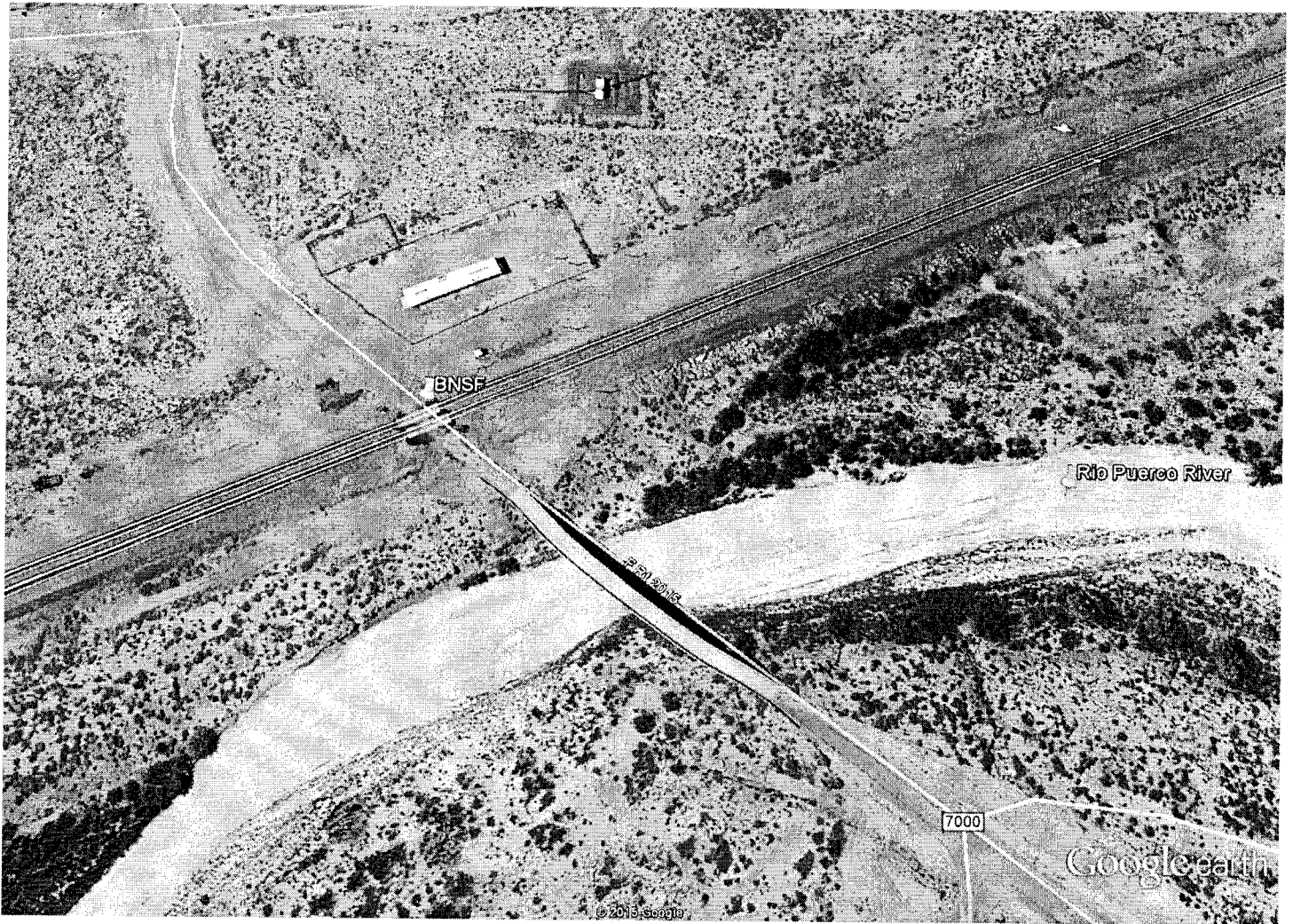
United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Indian Affairs
P.O. Box 1060
Gallup, New Mexico 87306



Google earth

feet 2000
meters 600





Google earth

